

Linda Clair
Seven-day Meditation Retreat
Kallara Conference Centre – September 2019
Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 4b – Tuesday morning discussion session

Question: I feel very frustrated. This morning, in the first sit, I got a really strong pain in my lower chest, around the abdomen somewhere, and I thought, "I'm not going to give up, I'm not going to let this pain get away from me." But I couldn't stand it. In the end I had to get up and sit on the chair, and I did a little bit of walking and it gradually went away. That left me feeling dissatisfied because if this pain that is coming is my past and I want to get rid of it, how is it going to work if every time I get a decent, strong pain I have to give up and come and sit on the chair. (laughing) It's never going to end is it?

Linda: Are you sure it's not a physical pain?

Question: No, I don't think so at all because it went gradually away as I sat on a chair and as I walked. I'm pretty sure it was all something different, not an illness.

Linda: Yes, you seem okay, well in fact, better than you've been for a while.

Question: Yes, I am. That's not my problem. (laughter)

Linda: How long did you sit before you got the pain? (less than half an hour) I'm not sure what to suggest other than tying you down to the floor. (laughter) I don't know. You have to get to the point where you go, "Oh, I've had enough, I've just got to try it."

Question: I did think afterwards perhaps I was frightened of something happening.

Linda: You were frightened a bit like R. was saying yesterday, of how she was scared of sitting for longer, scared of the pain and that she wouldn't be able to put up with it, but she did. And it's really the only way to get through your fear, as you know. But there's no easy way to do it. You need to go, "Okay, this time I'm going to do it."

Question: Right, next time.

Linda: No, *this* time. (laughter)

Question: I was possibly afraid that I might vomit.

Linda: Did you feel nauseous? (No.) Once you get through the first one you'll prove to yourself that you can do it, but there's no easy way. You just have to get to the point where you go, "Oh, I'm so sick of this, I'll try and put up with it," and see what happens. Watch the pain very carefully,

breathe. And you will be scared, there will be that fear there. Just try it one time and see how you go.

Question: My question is quite similar. I've been mindful of quite intense anxiety. It seems to be in my chest and lower abdomen. Even when I divert my attention to it and try to watch it, it doesn't seem to go away at all. It's been making sitting quite difficult. (laughing)

Linda: Have you sat before? You've done a retreat?

Question: Yes, but not a retreat. Nothing this intense, ever! (laughing) The most I've ever sat is maybe one hour. (laughter)

Linda: Oh, really! (laughing) So what motivated you to come to this?

Question: It was mostly the anxiety. I thought, "I've got to get a hold of this somehow, it's affecting my life too much." But I can't seem to shake it at the moment.

Linda: So when you feel it, try not to push it away. That's the hard bit. You just sit with it and feel it – really feel it. And don't feel like it's something wrong. What you're doing is facing all this anxiety, not distracting yourself. And when you're sitting there you become even more aware of it than ever because you're not doing anything to distract yourself from it.

You won't get immediate result from this. It's not like you sit and feel calmer and calmer and better. You sort of do but it also highlights it. And the stiller you become the more it highlights that anxiety. You'll really feel the effects of this after the retreat, and at times during the retreat too, but when you're in the middle of it and it's really intense it'll feel like, "What am I doing here? Everything seems to be worse." But it's just intensified by this situation.

Really what you're doing by sitting with it is getting through it. But try and accept it while it's there. And if you can feel it as a sensation in your body, like you said you were feeling here and in your abdomen, breathe into it and really feel it, and just face it full on rather than turning away and going, "I don't want to feel this. I'm here to get rid of this," which you are in a way. But really for things to dissolve they need to get stirred up even more and more. And you need to see them and feel them and not be scared of them, not be put off by it because anxiety is really just fear. Most people in the world walk around with intense anxiety and do all sorts of things to try and survive with it. So it's great that you're seeing it now and trying to do something about it. And this is really the way to do something about it. But you won't feel the immediate benefits of it.

Try and sit with it and feel it. And you're sitting really well. So yes, just do that and keep going. And if you've got question like this make sure you ask. But there's no easy way, there's no technique where you go boom and the anxiety is gone. It takes time to do it, but sitting with it over this period will definitely change it.

Question: Should I watch it throughout the entire sit?

Linda: Yes, and when you're not sitting too. So when you're not sitting and you feel it – you might feel anxiety and self-consciousness – really feel your body and feel it then too. Whatever you're doing, be in your body. So when the sit's finished don't go, "Okay, the sit's finished, I'll just get into

a normal mode.” Treat it all as the same. That really intensifies the whole thing. So watch it, be as close to it as you can. It’s all really a bluff but it feels very real at the time.

All anxiety comes, deep down, from the fear of death, that’s what it comes from. And what this is doing is getting to the source – that fear you’re doing to die. Because if you think, “This is who I am, this body is where I start and end,” there is going to be this deep anxiety about dying, because the only thing you know is that one day this body is going to die – you don’t know when or how.

Once you can get that out of the way you can get on with just living your life and enjoying your life, enjoying being in this body, without that intense fear and anxiety. So, when you’re feeling it, feel it as a sensation as much as possible and get as close to it as you can. Breathe into it and feel it rather than trying to use the breath or the sitting to get rid of it, because then you’ll feel, “Oh, it’s not working, I’m not doing the right thing.” But I’d say most people in this room at some time are feeling quite deep anxiety.

Question: I’ve had something similar going on, feeling a lot of self-consciousness and fear of exposure, which is really brought up by this work no doubt. I find myself in the sits doing nothing but body work: feelings coming up, breathing through them, then another one coming up, breathing through that, then another one, and maybe even scenes coming up that I haven’t had in this lifetime – I don’t know where they’re coming up from – and breathing through that. I feel at the end my mind is so busy, even though I’m staying in the body there’s all this activity going on.

Linda: There will be. You become more aware of it, as I was saying to L.. You do become much more of aware of it and you can tend to feel, “This isn’t working, this is not what’s supposed to be happening, it’s not supposed to be getting busier.” But it’s really like that all the time, you’re just not so aware of it. Most people have all these ways of distracting and feeling a bit calmer and just surviving, survival techniques really. When you say you breathe through it, do you get into the scene or the thought or the memory?

Question: I think it’s a bit of a mixture; I’m not too sure where I am. I think after a while I realise there is a strong feeling and I think of breathing through it. And then maybe I’m taken away by another feeling and I feel quite absorbed by it – it’s so physical sometimes. There’s no presence at that point. It’s almost like you realise you’re having a thought so get back to your body and breathe through that feeling. It’s quite exhausting.

Linda: It is exhausting, it’s really exhausting, but each time you do that – coming back to your body – it is wearing down the mind, that thinking process just a bit more. It is a cumulative thing, sort of in the opposite direction, where every time you do it it’s weakening the mind and you are becoming a bit stronger. But it’s incredibly tiring, so make sure you have rests in between. But you will feel more tired at times than you’ve ever, ever felt, and it won’t be a strictly physical tiredness, it’ll be this deep, incredible tiredness.

So keep it simple. As soon as you realise you’re off thinking, whether it’s an image, anything, bring your attention back to the belly. It’ll take a super-human effort to do that and that’s why you’re feeling so tired because you’re taking a stand and saying, “I’m not going to go with this, I’m coming back to where I am right now, however attractive it is.” Thinking can be very, very attractive. And it can be easier in a way because you’re allowing yourself to get taken away by this entity, put yourself

in your mind's hands, your ego, and just go, "Ah, it's just easier to go with it." Rather than take a stand and say, "No, I'm not going to this," – and you need to do that again and again and again.

But when you start to – take control is not really the right word but – start to really be here in your own deep strength and power, it's quite exhilarating and you start to see this is possible – "Maybe this is possible in me." Then you use that to keep going. Of course at times you'll get dragged down totally, but then you have to get up, get back on the horse and keep going. You'll get knocked down again and again and again; you have to keep getting up.

Question: It takes a lot of trust in the process, doesn't it?

Linda: It does, it takes a lot of trust in the process. But the more you practice, the more trust you develop, and the trust deepens because you do have little glimpses, "Ahh, yes, this is possible." But it's hard work. And it's hard because you read all this stuff about, "Oh, you wake up and you're enlightened and you don't have to make this effort," but you do. And you don't want to, everyone's looking for an easy way out, but in my experience there's no easy way out.

Question: The last two days of the last retreat I experienced a peace that I'd never experienced before. I was quite surprised because I never knew what it was. I always thought it was some sort of bliss. It's actually very different. Yesterday morning I had a beautiful sit: really present, really attentive, lovely. And I thought, "I'm going to have beautiful sits from then on." (laughing) It's been hard slog ever since. I realised I need to let go and lose control, I have no control of any of this process.

Linda: Yes, you don't. And I know you're used to being very organised and having all this stuff going, and a very strong career woman, but this is different. You become even stronger by giving up trying to control. So the strength comes in that ability to be humble and vulnerable. That doesn't mean you lie on the floor and put your legs in the air. (laughter) It's a different thing, it's this really deep humility and vulnerability.

You said you had that fear of being exposed. I'd say most people do because they're scared that someone's going to see the real you, which is actually very beautiful. But you keep up this shell so nobody can get in there and maybe hurt you. It doesn't mean that you're never going to get hurt, but to be vulnerable, it's like you're opening yourself up and people can do things.

Question: I can't even get in that shell at times.

Linda: No, it can be so strong. So this is gradually, gradually – and it needs to be gradual, it can't happen all at once. It's too much to give up all at once but it happens bit by bit. And after something like this you'll feel a deep change. You might not see it at first and it might not be how you think things should be but you will notice something.

Question: Since I met you a year ago I feel a lot more softness. Not always, but at times. It's like a new feeling. That makes me trust in the process more.

Linda: Good.

Question: I wanted ask about pushing into the pain when it's very painful. I have a sort of fear of going there and failing, like if I move around. I don't know, I'm very confused about what I'm trying to say.

Linda: Well, there's no such thing as failing in this. It's just not it. And actually it's not part of my vocabulary anymore – it's not part of this – there's no failing. There's just no such thing. So, for one thing, try not to push through the pain or push into pain or push anything. You can extend yourself but there'll be times when it's so intense that you just can't do it, you can't sit there.

So then you need to just accept that, not see it as a failure but just, this isn't the right time. And there'll be other times when you will have the energy to be able to sit through and sit for longer periods. But it's not a measure of where you are, how deeply you're going into this, the time that you sit, because there are different things happening. (laughing) Why are you smiling? Have I said this to you before?

Question: It's more that I always get hung up on it.

Linda: Yes, so it's not a measure. You might see L., or anyone, sitting for a long period but it doesn't mean that you should be sitting for long periods. Even though we're all doing this together it's a very individual thing as well. Different things are happening in everyone at different times. So don't feel that you should be sitting for three hours every time. Sometimes it's more effective not to sit for as long, and instead just sit for half an hour and face that thing that you've got about failing and going, "Oh, I only sat for half an hour." It can be good to sit for different periods, just to confuse the mind as well. So be patient, and listen to your body. There'll be times when you do have the energy to sit through and other times when you don't, but it doesn't mean that you're failing.

How are you R.? I was interested in what you were saying yesterday about the pain. Where do you get the pain?

Question: In the base of my skull and my shin. I can see over the past I'd be so frightened of that: sweating, drama. That's where I really doubted you when you would say it's not real pain, but now I can feel that. But even though on a pain scale it would be seven-and-a-half, I feel there's some kind of anaesthetic around it. I know it should be hurting more. I don't know where I go but I can move away from it or somewhere and it doesn't make me panic. This is the first retreat where I feel a bit cold when I sit, and not sweating and not desperate for the bell. It happened with the five-thirty sit – my mind was really wanting to sit longer but feeling totally scared, "What if I have to jump up when the next sit starts? What about this...?" But now that's gone.

Linda: And you need to see that you can do that. You're not going to get struck down if it's too much and you do have to get up and sit in a chair. So what, it doesn't matter. So really it's up to you. It's not like you have to.

Question: Is it only through grounding that you can get into that non-commenting, non-judgmental, sensations-watching state? Last night I could be so vigilant watching the sensation. There was so much material to work with because there's so much is happening in the now. So I'm trying to see why I can't get to that again. It takes some energy.

Linda: It takes more energy than anyone ever realises. To be in that state even for a few minutes takes so much energy that it might take you a long time recover and built up that energy again. It's going incredibly fast, and like you said, there is so much happening. *Everything* is happening right now. And everything that has ever happened is happening now. So it's an incredible thing that you're doing, that you mind can't possibly grasp.

But when you're feeling that – it might feel in a way effortless – it's taking a lot of energy. When things are really effortless they're going so fast that they're taking a lot of energy. So the energy in you is transforming from a time-based, quite sluggish energy to the energy of now, which is faster than anything, faster than the speed of light, just unimaginably fast. So you need to gradually build up to that.

Question: How would I do that?

Linda: Well, you're doing it, that's what you're doing. And what you said was really good, was great. You keep doing this and more energy comes in. It does help being around someone in this state because you'll automatically take in more energy. And the more grounded you are the more energy you can absorb safely and permanently, without it dissipating and the pressure becoming so great that you need to release it.

So the more grounded you are the more energy you can take in – it's like an electrical current – but you need to be grounded to be able to take it in. And your body starts to change. It actually starts to change from what you see as a purely physical organism to, in some ways, more non-physical, because it's absorbing this energy that is not fixed, is not physical. And it's changing every cell in your body – so much is happening.

But what you said about everything happening now – it's so true. And you have to be so alert. People have periods where they go, "Is this it? It's a bit boring." You've got no time to be bored.

Question: It's very rapid, you have to be so vigilant. All your dramas and all your tendencies that you have – you don't have the time and you can't get caught up.

Linda: There's no time. There's no time to do anything. There's literally no time. So you have to be super vigilant. It's why people call it being awake – you just can't go to sleep. You just can't because there's no time. There's not time to do anything, there's no time to think. As soon as you start to think, you're in time. You start to create this illusion that's time, and that drags you down again. But being in that state for short periods will take a lot of energy, so you have to be patient and it will gradually, gradually increase. The speed of your consciousness, your intelligence, will start to take over more and more and will increase. But you still have to be patient with it as well.

Question: I can see it can be a bit dangerous if I try to do this at home. (laughter) I don't try to have long sits at home. But I think after these retreats, and pushing myself to sit longer, I think I'll push myself at home as well.

Linda: I'd say have long sits at home if you feel to, because it's fine because you're working as well. So you haven't got the chance to just sit by yourself all day and isolate yourself, so it's more balanced because you're doing that. And your work is grounding you as well. But I wouldn't advise

people to do long, long retreats by themselves, regularly at home. It's one of the reasons that I'm here – to really, really ground you.

Question: What about syncing the times with all the retreats you have when I'm not physically present near you?

Linda: Yes, some people have been doing that. Yes, I suppose it's a good thing to do. Quite a few people have been doing it.

Question: I think it gives me the leverage to sit more hours in a day. After that experience being vigilant and just now, it makes me so sick of myself.

Linda: Yes, I felt the same. You have an experience like that and you go, "Oh, I don't want to go back to this." You get to a point where you get so sick of yourself that it gives you that push to jump. But it needs to be at the right time though, when you're ready. But yes, I got really sick of myself. And that gives you even more momentum to keep going.

Question: How did it start transforming your daily life when you're getting more desperate and things like that?

Linda: Well, it was always there. I'd have exchanges with my teacher sometimes that were deeply energetic, and I know I say don't think but I'd actually feel it, and I'd go over it and feel it. And it was just always there. Almost everything I did – not everything – I would use as a practice because it was the only thing that really, really mattered. Other things did matter but it was the main thing that mattered to me. So I would be as conscious or aware of what I was doing as I could during the day, sitting, whatever I was doing.